

**BUDDHA'S  
FIRST SACRED HAIR RELIC PAGODA  
BOTATAUNG**



***HISTORY OF THE BOTATAUNG PAGODA  
AND  
BRIEF HISTORY OF THE (NAN OO)  
ROYAL PALACE BRONZE IMAGE***

**SEIKKAN TOWNSHIP,  
YANGON DIVISION  
UNION OF MYANMAR.**



## **HISTORY OF THE BOTATAUNG PAGODA BUDDHA'S FIRST SACRED HAIR RELIC PAGODA**

Over 2500 years ago in the 6th century B.C. (Siddhartha Gotama) Buddha was Enlightened at the foot of the Bodhi-Tree in Buddha Gaya, India. Two trader brothers Tapussa and Bhallika of Okkla later Dagon now Yangon city of Myanmar journeyed to India, carrying their goods with 500 bullock carts approached Gaya. On the 49th day after the Buddha was Enlightened, while the Buddha was sitting under the Ratayatana Tree enjoying the bliss of emancipation for seven days. Tapussa and Bhallika met the Buddha and offered honey cakes to the Buddha. They paid reverence to the Buddha and took refuge in the Buddha and Dhamma (Buddhist Doctrine). The Buddha knowing that in centuries to come the Buddhist Doctrine will flourish in Myanmar, with his right hand gave away eight strands of his sacred hair relics to the two brothers.

The ship carrying the eight strands of the sacred hair relics arrived at the Botataung Bank on the Yangon River. King Okkalapa



with the court officials and a guard of honour comprising of one thousand military officers came down to the Botataung Bank on the Yangon River, took possession of the eight strands of the sacred hair relics from the brothers Tapussa and Bhallika.

King Okkalapa placed the hair relics on the very site the present Botataung Pagoda was built and allowed the people to pay homage for six months. As a token of gratitude, King Okkalapa gave one hair relic each to the two brothers. The elder brother Tapussa enshrined the hair relic and built a pagoda over the very site where the eight strands of hair relics were kept for six months. The rest of the hair relics were taken to the Theinkothara Hill and enshrined. Over it the famous Shwedagon Pagoda was built.

For the second time another strand of Buddha's hair relic was enshrined in the Botataung Pagoda by Thirimartawka Theiktha King of Thaton.

The third strand of Buddha's hair relic and two body relics were also enshrined in the Botataung Pagoda by King Sihadipa of Syriam.

Altogether three strands of Buddha's holy hair relics and two body relics were enshrined within this Botataung Pagoda at three different times by these different Myanmar Kings.

On the 8th of November 1943 the RAF bombed Yangon's wharves and a whole stack of bombs straddled the ancient Botataung Pagoda, leaving where had stood one of Myanmar's oldest and most venerated Pagoda, a heap of twisted and blackened ruins.

After the 2nd World War a Rehabilitation Committee was formed to rebuild the Pagoda.

During construction a relic chamber was found in the very centre of the site where the Pagoda was to be rebuilt. Inside the relic chamber a laterite stone casket in the shape of a cone with a diameter of 23in. and 39in. high was found. Inside the laterite cone another small stone cone was found and inside this stone cone a small pagoda of pure gold was found. When the golden pagoda was lifted a tiny gold cylinder containing two small body relics each the size of a mustard seed and a sacred hair relic of the Buddha was found.

With three newly found relics a new Pagoda was built in 1948 and completed in 1953. The new Pagoda was of original design and with a height of 132ft. 7in on a base of 96ft. x 96ft. The pagoda is of a reinforced concrete structure. It is a happy blend of the ancient and of the ultramodern. Unlike many of the



older shrines, the Pagoda is not a solid core but has a huge internal cavity where people may enter.

There is a well in the centre of the Pagoda showing the site of the ancient relic chamber and this is kept open. An altar is erected in this relic chamber where the relics will rest so that they may be taken out on special occasions for homage.

The Buddha's First Sacred Hair Relic Pagoda also known as the Botataung Pagoda is symbolic of the vitality and energy exhibited in the great Buddhist Revival. Here from the ruins of the old culture was being salvaged all that was best of the ancient wisdom and displayed in modern manner to a modern world.

The Botataung Pagoda to be more befitting a place of worship needed a major renovation.

In 1990 with the help of the State, renovation and constructional works were carried out within the Pagoda compound. There had been a good deal of encroachment on the ancient Pagoda Lands when Myanmar was annexed by the British. As these lands have been returned by the State and the Pagoda site is now returned to its original site.

In the land of the Golden Pagodas, all historical Pagodas are gilded with gold. Buddha's First Sacred Hair Relic Pagoda is no exception. Botataung Pagoda is the First Pagoda to be built in the world with the very first sacred hair relic of (Siddhartha Gotama) Buddha.

**U Aung Su**

B.Sc. Engg., MASCE (U.S.A)

Chief Engineer (Retd.)

Myanma Port Authority

Trustee

Buddha's First Sacred Hair Relic Pagoda





## **BRIEF HISTORY OF THE (NAN OO) ROYAL PALACE BRONZE IMAGE**

**(Buddha's Image returned to Myanmar from Britain)**

King Mindon of the Konbaung Dynasty ruled Myanmar from his Royal Palace at Mandalay and conducted the Fifth Buddhist Synod. King Mindon who was a religious king built many pagodas around Mandalay, and by his Royal Order wrote the whole Buddhist scriptures on stone tablets. In 1859 by his Royal Order cast the Gilded Bronze Image of the Buddha. The Gilded Bronze Image was cast with gold, silver, bronze, iron and lead in different proportions. Inside the Gilded Bronze Image, King Mindon enshrined Buddha's sacred relics, consecrated the Image and kept the Image in his Royal Glass Palace to pay homage by the Royal Family. This Image of the Buddha was later came to be known as the RoyalPlace Bronze Image.

On the 29th of November 1885 the British annexed upper Myanmar and captured the Royal Palace at Mandalay.



Kinbg Thibaw and Queen Supayalatt were exiled to India. On the 1st of January 1886 General Prendergat commander of the Britist Army took away about 300 Buddha's Images and among the Images taken was the famous Royal Palace Bronze Image. General Prendergat shipped this Royal Palace Bronze Image and the King's Throne to Britain.

The Royal Palace Bronze Image arrived safely in Britain and together with the Royal throne were exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London for many years.

On January the 4th 1948 Myanmar was independent again and the famous Royal Palace Bronze Image was never forgotten by the Myanmar people. The Myanmar Government requested the British Government for the return of all Royal possessions taken from the Mandalay Palace after the 3rd Anglo Myanmar War.

The Royal Palace Bronze Image was on foreign soil for nearly 66 years. Finally the Royal Palace Bronze Image arrived back to Myanmar soil on Sunday the 17th of June 1951 by Merchant Vessel "Staffordshire".

The Royal Place Bronze Image arrived at Yangon Port and taken to the Botataung Pagoda where the Buddha's First Sacred Hair Relic was enshrined. The Royal Palace Bronze Image was consecrated in a specially erected temporary shrine.

After thirty years in this temporary shrine the Royal Palace Bronze Image was finally transfered to a newly built Glass Pannelled Shrine in the Botataung Pagoda Compound on Saturday the 16th of May 1981.

This is the brief history of the famous Buddha's Image that was taken from Mandalay then the old capital of Myanmar and returned from Britain after nearly 66 years to Yangon city in Myanmar.

## **U Aung Su**

B.Sc. Engg., MASCE (U.S.A)

Chief Engineer (Retd.)

Myanma Port Authority

Trustee

Buddha's First Sacred Hair Relic Pagoda

---

**YOMA PRESS**

No.20, Thitsar Street, Mingalar Taung Nyunt Township, Yangon